

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The West Ham Scandal.

AFTER the Birmingham scandal the West Ham scandal. The Birmingham bigots have got the Secularists turned out of their Board-school meeting-place, and the West Ham bigots are trying desperately to get the *Freethinker* turned out of the Free Library. They have been engaged in this dirty work for some time. When they sought a division on the Town Council some weeks ago they were ignominiously defeated. But they continued the agitation out of doors, and the clericals of all denominations were set howling in chorus. Some of these gentlemen, like Father Dooley, confessed that they had never seen a copy of the *Freethinker*; but that was no matter, they were quite sure all the same that it was a blasphemous and an immoral rag, which ought to be burnt, like its editor. Accordingly, the Town Council was appealed to again. On Tuesday, February 14, the Council sat for three hours, two hours and a half of which were devoted to the great *Freethinker* question. Councillor Bishop had a motion on the agenda, that this journal should be "kept in reserve and supplied to readers on application." Alderman Kelly was to move that it should be "no longer accepted or taken in at the Public Libraries." Deputations were also to wait upon the Council from "the clergy of the Church of England, the priests of the Church of Rome, the ministers of the Nonconformist places of worship, the United Christian Evidence Brigade, and the *Freethinker* Expulsion Committee"—the title of the last body being irresistibly comic. This mighty coalition was arrayed against one poor Freethought journal. It was laughable on the face of it. But there were serious interests at stake—at least they said so. West Ham was in deadly peril; its religion, its morality, its everything precious, was jeopardised by that wretched, miserable, damnable *Freethinker*.

Naturally, the public crowded into the gallery in expectation of a treat, and they were not disappointed. Sometimes they contributed a small but pungent share to the discussion. As the first deputation filed in, consisting of what the *Herald* calls "a very large body of ministers of all denominations," someone in the gallery said, "Let 'em all come!" When one of the Councillors thought there had been enough speechifying by the men of God, and wanted to stop it, a gallery man exclaimed, "Give the mental chloroformers a chance!" When the lunatic Triggs, of the Expulsion Committee, remarked that the *Freethinker* was "indecent in its allusions to sexual matters"—which is a discovery—another gallery man cried, "That's only your dirty mind." These illustrations, which we cull from the *Herald's* long and faithful report, will suffice to show the character of the entertainment.

Let us pause here to observe that the West Ham Trades Council, through its secretary, Alderman Hayday, expressed the hope that the Town Council would stand firmly by its previous decision to treat the *Freethinker* like other publications. The Trades Council added that it directly represented seven thousand workmen. For which we say "Thanks, a thousand thanks!"

And now for the deputations. They were introduced by Alderman Smith, an absurd bigot, who boasts of having voted against the Sunday League. "My own feeling," he said, "is that whatever is atheistic and poisonous should be consigned to the place where the wicked eventually shall suffer; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." For our part, we don't wish this

man any harm; we shouldn't like to see him in the place he alluded to; his proper place is a lunatic asylum, with visitors and an ounce of tobacco twice a week.

Uprose next the Rev. Canon Pelly, vicar of West Ham, and addressed the Town Council. This gentleman let it appear that he really wished to "burke" the *Freethinker*. What he most of all regretted was the advertisement it was obtaining. After some hypocritical remarks about Jesus Christ as the greatest of Socialists, which were meant as soap for the Labor party, he proceeded to assure the Council that "this paper contains much that is deeply irreverent to our Lord; it suggests the grossest immorality on the part of the blessed Virgin Mary; it ridicules our highest act of worship, the Lord's Supper; and it contains monstrous skits on the Bible." He spoke for the young (bless them!). But not only for the young; he also spoke for his fellow ministers and their congregations. Precisely so. He was delivering a trade harangue as a clerical protectionist. The *motif* of his speech was, "Don't let the *Freethinker* take away my customers."

Then came the Rev. J. H. French, of Woodgrange Baptist Church, who spoke on behalf of the Nonconformists. This gentleman said that he valued the free press, but there were higher interests than that—the interests of morality, and the purity of private and domestic life. Presently he showed that all he meant was this—that morality and purity depend upon Christianity. He did indeed say that "some of the articles in that paper gave details unfit for young people to read"—which is a malicious falsehood, although it is perfectly true of the Bible. But this was only in passing. Mr. French soon came to the real grievance. "Its columns were one long bitter attack on the Bible," it opposed "the fundamental ideas of the Bible," its very presence was "an offence to the vast body of Christians in the borough," it tried to "make Christianity appear ridiculous," and it was "given over to blasphemy."

Next came the Rev. Father Osmund, who spoke for the Roman Catholics, and mostly said ditto to the previous orators. He remarked that the *Freethinker* was "offensive," it lacerated his "feelings," and it "robbed the young generation of the belief in God and the hope of a future life." Father Osmund sat down with a handkerchief full of tears.

Then stood up the spokesman of the United Christian Evidence Brigade—united for this special occasion. His name was Cartwright, and he said he was a Christian and a Socialist. (A voice in the gallery cried, "Rats!") This fellow gave a quotation: "Legal marriage is legal prostitution." "Is that in the *Freethinker*?" asked Councillor Thorne. But the suggestive liar was not going to answer questions, for he knew he was caught. "Speak the truth," said Councillor Thorne; but the advice was wasted on that incarnation of irreclaimable mendacity. Blackguard Cartwright proceeded to flourish a copy of the *Elements of Social Science*—a book which has been editorially mentioned in the *Freethinker* twice in eighteen years, not nearly as often as the Bible. Councillors Thorne and Godbold said it was a very good book, and the Mayor cut short Blackguard Cartwright's quotations. Nobody could see their relation to the *Freethinker*. Then lunatic Triggs talked on behalf of the ridiculous Expulsion Committee, and was soon laughed into silence.

Alderman Kelly then moved his resolution, and Councillor Weaver Smith supported it, saying that the *Freethinker* "held the Christian religion up to scorn

and ridicule." Alderman Hayday opposed. He said that the Council ought not to turn press censors, and that one man's convictions were as good as another's. Alderman Fulcher stood up for this journal, and whipped the hypocrites who tried to use Bradlaugh's name against it. Councillor Scanlon, as a Catholic Socialist, favored its total exclusion from the Libraries; whereupon Alderman Athey said that he began to see what Home Rule would mean in Ireland. The exclusion amendment was put and lost by twenty-four votes to eighteen. Councillor Alden then said that the opinion of the *people* should be taken. He moved as a further amendment that a poll of the burgesses should be taken as to the full inclusion, the partial inclusion, or the total exclusion of the *Freethinker*. In the course of the ensuing debate Councillor Godbold said that the Labor party would stand firm, even if they lost every one of their seats. Councillor Howard said that the paper had been in the Library for five years, and if it was poison it was very *slow* poison. Councillor Terrett said he was a reader of the *Freethinker*, and had been a Secularist thirteen years. Finally, it was unanimously decided that the Borough should be polled, the details being left to the Libraries Committee.

Was ever a borough polled before on such a question? It will be a splendid advertisement for the *Freethinker*, and consequently for Secularism. But, to speak personally, I am anxious that this advertisement should be complete. The bigots will tell the West Ham burgesses lies about the *Freethinker*. I want to tell them the truth. To this end I propose to hire the best available hall in the borough, and to address a free and open meeting. I also propose to draw up and print a manifesto, which I will try to get distributed thoroughly, having a copy left at every house. This will involve an expenditure which I cannot bear alone. Will my friends, the friends of this journal, the friends of the Freethought movement, aid me? What *is* done must be done *immediately*.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Formation of Opinions.

In this age of conflicting opinions it is very desirable that proper care should be taken in arriving at conclusions upon the various topics which command our attention. The great difference between periods of ignorance and knowledge is that, in the former state, people based their views upon trust in others, while in the latter condition they rely upon their own intellectual discrimination. The drawback with professed Christians in general is that they seldom study the nature of their faith or reflect upon *why* they should accept it. This intellectual indifference gives the priests of all denominations a powerful and injurious hold over the minds of their followers. In this respect, as in others, Free-thinkers present a welcome contrast. Even if, as it is sometimes urged, their conclusions are wrong, such conclusions are the result of thought and examination. One of the most useful teachings of Secularism is that its adherents should judiciously consider what opinions they form, and the reason they have for holding such opinions.

It is necessary that all disputed points should be clearly defined, and that the leading terms used by public speakers should be properly understood. Of course, such precaution would often interfere with the flow of words, but it would also indicate what is meant by phrases employed. Words are only valuable in proportion as they convey solid ideas. The first lesson which lecturers, debaters, writers, and preachers should learn is the art of always selecting the same terms to express the same signification. Many large and important works may be searched in vain for a definition of language employed. In Sociology, Science, Philosophy, and Religion the correct meaning of terms is often of the highest importance, and, where due explicitness is observed, an understanding of what is meant will be arrived at, even if conviction does not follow. Bacon remarks that men may differ greatly about religion, but God knows they mean the same thing. Now, that is exactly what they do not do, and what God knows is of no interest to us:

we require the knowledge; and it is exceedingly difficult to gather from the many opposing declarations of religion which is the true one. To say nothing of the numerous contradictory minor views which obtain upon the subject, no one can truthfully say the religion of the Roman Catholic is the same as that of the Protestant, any more than that the doctrines of the Trinitarian and the Unitarian are alike. No one definite opinion can be formed of religion while its devotees describe it in language which is contradictory, and therefore misleading.

Many persons object to the application of reason and logical precision to religion, although they profess to be most exacting in applying both in the study of philosophy, and even in their commercial dealings. The truth is, unbiased impartiality is as much required in the one case as in the other. The more evenly balanced a man's judgment is, and the less it is disturbed by religious speculation, the better is he enabled to perform the business duties of life. Moreover, if religion be what its believers allege it is, the employment of our mental faculties to distinguish between the true and the false is as desirable as it is in the carrying on of everyday secular affairs. The suspension of any of our mental faculties upon any matter must be followed by injurious results. To some it may appear strange, but it is a fact nevertheless, that the generality of mankind are thoroughly indifferent to the great truth that the eternal laws of nature connect error with the failure to duly exercise our intellectual faculties in the forming of our opinions. Such exercise is as essential in religion as it is in the study of the laws of health. The neglect in either case leads to weakness, while the due observance of reasonable consideration tends to healthy vigor. The causes which produce erroneous conclusions are as natural as those which bring discomfort and ill-health.

One of the most important discoveries a man can make in forming an opinion on abstruse questions is that of his own ignorance. Man must unlearn much of what custom and old associations have taught him. If he does not, it is more than likely that he will fail in the object of his search. This is the great drawback of the orthodox professors of Christianity. They cling to the traditions of the past, and expect those who live in the latter part of the nineteenth century to regulate their lives by rules prescribed two thousand years ago—rules, be it observed, that were given to the world in times of ignorance and mental slavery. Even supposing the teachings of the Church were useful (which is exceedingly doubtful) centuries ago, it does not follow they would have the same effect to-day. Then ignorance, credulity, and blind faith were almost universal in the Church; now knowledge, reason, and determination to investigate are important factors, not only among intelligent professors of Christianity, but also in every section of society. In accordance with the principle of evolution, the light of modern thought has superseded the darkness of ancient tradition. The present is a period of mental activity, not of passive submission. Doubt has broken down many of the barriers to mental freedom, and prompted men to ask what are the grounds of their opinions? Have they been arrived at after due consideration, or have they been accepted as a matter of course because they accord with the fashion of the time?

Few persons at the present day arrive at any opinion of great value, the truth of which can be tested, who were not first impressed with doubt. That is the very feeling which impels one to inquire. It has been well said that the road to belief is through the portals of doubt, and yet the ingratitude of mankind to those benefactors who first raised doubts is notorious. While we urge these considerations, it must not be supposed that we anticipate any general agreement of opinion as to religious conduct, which may be anything from worshipping the sun to kissing the Pope's toe. And why is this? Simply because it is not to be expected that all men's thoughts, any more than their faces, should be alike. This ought to be readily understood when we remember that men's physical constitutions, their inclinations, their education, and their interests, are different. The amount of knowledge possessed, the capacity to understand, and the power of self-dependence vary with individuals. And yet well-thought-out opinions, if they are opposed to the popular

faith, are condemned by those who profess to believe in the New Testament injunction to "Prove all things." Unity of opinion as to religion can only exist, if at all, where either general ignorance or unlimited confidence in what is taught prevails. Whoever is familiar with the early formation of ideas among children may learn how natural it is for the mind to form false and extravagant views of men and things. It was the same with the youthful mind of the world, and the trouble with the majority of theologians is that the infantile mind never develops in this particular from its primitive state.

The natural timidity of some people is so increased by the conditions of life that they dare not doubt the word of the priests; hence, where this is so, the possibility of correct opinions being formed is very remote. This fact will largely account for the prevalence of so many erroneous opinions in our midst to-day. We have to grapple with a legacy of priestcraft which has fostered error and sought to crush the truth whenever it was opposed to its creeds and dogmas. It cannot be too often repeated that our opinions, whether true or false, are the result of circumstances to which we are subjected, and to our lack of power to rightly interpret the real meaning of things by which we are surrounded. This fact alone should cause us to respect all men who hold honest opinions, whether they are in agreement with our own or not. The one thing to be considered is that, in forming our opinions, we should aim to arrive at truth and to allow reason to exercise its legitimate sway, free from any bias to the past or any prejudice towards existing opinions.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that an opinion is valuable only as such, and it does not follow that any particular opinion is right, however sincerely it is entertained. Hence we ought to avoid all bigotry or dogmatism, and admit the possibility of others being right. As to who has formed the correct opinion, that can only be decided, if at all, by calm reasoning, the study of the *pros* and *cons.*, and the impartial consideration of the evidence that can be adduced in favor of the contention urged. If what has here been stated were duly observed and acted upon, persecution for differences of opinion would cease, the right to differ would be more recognised reality, and liberty and justice would be more than mere names.

CHARLES WATTS.

Gods and their Makers.*

ABOUT eighteen months ago there was issued by John Lane a little volume that failed to receive anything like the attention it deserved; nor, so far as I can gather, has its circulation been as great as its merits demanded. Such newspaper reviews of it as came under my notice were easily divisible into two classes. The dull ones saw nothing in it but a fairy tale prettily told; the smart ones evidently appreciated its delicate and powerful satire, but thought it too dangerous to be dealt with at any great length. I have read it through twice, enjoyed it better the second time than the first, and now take the opportunity of introducing to such of my readers as are not acquainted with the book the most charming piece of satire on the God-idea that I have read for some time.

Mr. Houseman's story centres round three children, Peeti, Daz, and Aystah—the latter a girl, belonging to a tribe with whom it is a custom for each individual to select a god to worship on arriving at a certain age. Peeti grew up wild and adventurous, having been without a mother from his earliest years. But if he had never known a mother's tenderness, he had at least the advantage of never having had the pain of breaking through the teaching received from one. For "they, most of all, and most innocently of all, are the aiders and abettors of the cruel spinners of priestcraft. They undo our swaddling bands only to render us up into a deeper bondage, and wash off the dew of our birth by a chrism which is one of shame and denial." Daz, although less adventurous than Peeti, is far more profound in his

thinking, and it is he who finally aims at destroying the gods whom Peeti only dreams of deposing.

Driven to select a god, Peeti makes one of a gourd, which reflects, as every god does, the character of its creator. "He had secured to himself a god beyond all conception marvellous, new, and great, abounding in those instincts which cried aloud in himself for the flesh of priests when rage and resentment had dominion over his heart." Its name was "Katchywallah," meaning "Touch-me-who-dare," and Peeti's refusal to bring this to the high priest to receive the stamp of orthodoxy secures him a public whipping, which still further aggravates his natural dislike to priests in general.

I must leave those who read the book to follow in detail the steps by means of which Aystah's god Hoosh is eaten by a cow, and Peeti's god taken to pieces by Aystah, which she imagines has swallowed her deity, and the ripping open of the god Glu-glu by a cow. The manner in which Peeti and Aystah are mixed up in these sacrilegious proceedings leads to them being banished to the "Island of the Secret Mysteries," where all the gods are sent on the death of their owners. It is while on this voyage to the island that the lesson of Peeti's recent experiences breaks forth in a passionate outburst against gods in general.

"The gods! he stormed, the gods! his fiery heart came fresh from the indignation of his spiritual trappings, its fury and its loathing; Glu-glu, he mocked at, torn by a common cow; Katchywallah, submissive to female dentistry; Hoosh, cow-eaten; and the spirit in them, if they lived, mere devilry.

"Hoosh was no devil, protested Aystah. Hoosh! Peeti laughed back. Hoosh was you, the worst of you; Katchywallah was *my* worst. Aystah! cried the young prophet, rapping shrewd knuckles at the gates of light; our gods are ourselves, the greedy parts of us, the lust, the cruelty, the love of evil! Oh, curse such."

Arrived at the island, Peeti meets with two surprises. First, the place is swarming with gods of all shapes and sizes. "Some with heads and some with none, centipedes some, triple-jointed some, legless, armless, bat-winged, fish-tailed and finny, lizard-like, wooden, leathery, feathery, indecent, grotesque—a tribe without common species, a community without kinship, save in competitive ugliness." And, secondly, the gods are perfectly harmless as long as one is firm with them. One of the subtlest pieces of satire in the book is where the author pictures the rabble of gods clamorous for the worship of the newcomers. Worship is to the gods what food is to man. It is their food; they are created by it, sustained by it, and gradually perish without it. Mr. Houseman evidently believes that gods are like kings—they only exist so long as we believe in them; and I agree with him.

"So trading on their piteous weakness," Peeti gives the gods certain duties to perform, in return for which he gives to one of them each day a certain modicum of worship. This worship is strictly for services rendered, and if the people of England adopted the same rule there would be a big balance in hand from the millions now spent annually on a God who, as Carlyle lamented, "does nothing." Only one god ventured to object to Peeti's regulations, and then, while Peeti was reflecting on the answer he should give, "Aystah had risen equal to the occasion; she had run forward and taken hold of the flabbergasted god, and then and there cuffed him before them all, till their was no more spirit left in him."

But even the presence of the gods sickened the soul of Peeti, and with the awakening of the parental instinct in himself and Aystah their presence became daily more distasteful. "To his clean spirit it became abhorrent that here should be the heritage of his race, in a land polluted by a brood so hideous as these gods of his forefathers.....How piteous the fate of those who should come after, if their lot were to lie here for ever amid these vile incarnations of all that was evil in past generations."

Peeti's deliverance from this condition of things comes from an unexpected quarter. Daz, Aystah's little brother, always an object of vague unrest to the priests, became still more disquieting as he came of age to choose a god. Apparently, he was growing up one of those individuals "who don't believe in no god nor nothing," and it was felt that here was a case that

* *Gods and their Makers.* By Laurence Houseman. (John Lane.) 3s. 6d. nett.

needed taking in hand. A god, designed by the priests for Daz's benefit, was ordered, but disappeared mysteriously on the eve of completion. Day after day fresh gods disappeared, until finally, when the high priest's own deity was missing, a search was organised, with the result that Daz was discovered, deep in the woods, bowing before a god, mighty and terrible to behold, bearing the following inscription :

My name is Cham-pum. In me gods die daily.

This, then, was the end of Daz's dreaming and meditation. While Peeti, with all his boldness and love of adventure, had merely added one more to the world's gods, Daz, the thinker, had caught a vision of a nobler kind, of creating something that should rid the world of those gods which had caused so much trouble and suffering. Mr. Houseman is careful to indicate that "Cham-pum" was far more the outcome of pure thought than any other of the tribal deities; and, although one is disinclined to interrupt the thread of the story by too much moralising, one may be excused for pointing out that it is the author's obvious intention to personify in the deity of Daz that all-conquering scientific activity that has buried so many of the world's gods beneath the monuments of its own discoveries.

And so Daz was in turn solemnly excommunicated, and he and his god cast adrift upon the waters, "and, being rid of him, having shifted the apparent doom from their sight, the priests, blind and without understanding, thought to have kept the faith and to have saved themselves alive." And thus it has always been. Always have priestcraft and religion sought to suppress the new thought by strangling its thinker; always has it sought to keep the world down to a dead level of mediocrity, guiding its life by the dead past rather than by the living present. And just as Freethinkers have oft gone to their deaths, and illuminated with their funeral pyre the path for brave men to tread, so Daz, dying of starvation long before the raft reached the "Island of the Secret Mysteries," brought comfort and deliverance to the minds of Peeti and Aystah.

It was this raft, bearing the body of Daz and his god, that Peeti one day sighted on nearing the island. The gods clustered expectantly on the shore, little dreaming of the fate that was in store for them. Even Peeti stood aghast at the scene that followed "Chain-pum's" landing. "The spirit which Daz's genius had evoked, now that he was dead, the instrument (as it had before been the symbol) of the destruction to which he had doomed the theology of his tribe," had a truly insatiable appetite for gods. One by one they went down before it, just as in that larger world of human history the spirit awakened by such men as Copernicus, Newton, Laplace, and Darwin has devoured the gods that fattened upon the ignorance and credulity of their worshippers.

That night Peeti vowed to Aystah that he would take her away from a place so god-trodden and accursed, and imparted to her the result of his philosophy :—

"Our gods," he said, "are but the evil that is in us. We die, and they take our life; as it goes from us, so it comes to them. We die, and they become, alive, what we conceived of them ere they had life. Katchywallah did not live, nor Hoosh, when he came here; that was because we are not dead. But Glu-glu—think of it!—Glu-glu took life from my father, and used it in striving to kill me! Are we all devils, that our gods have nothing but hatred and cruelty in their dwellings? Ah! it was our priests; they taught us to embody our first imagination of evil, our lust, our passion for cruelty, and to set that up, and all our lives to worship it..... Daz must have been very great, with a terrible hatred towards the gods. They killed him for that; I can see it all now. And yet I do not know if it is cruel to wish to kill all the gods. Daz was great, and he had such thoughts; but we cannot see as he saw, we cannot dare what he dared."

And so Peeti and Aystah once more mount their raft and drift seaward in search of a land where the gods are not. And, as they go, one small fish-tailed god pursues them, crying piteously: "Take me too." Aystah, woman like, with a clinging to the old customs, would have relented, but Peeti was inexorable. He would be no longer contaminated by the presence of even one of the evil crew; no longer have their sun of

life clouded by "the shadow of man's hand, in the thing named his god."

There is much more in Mr. Houseman's book that deserves quotation, particularly the tender passages describing the life of Peeti and Aystah on the Island of Secret Mysteries, and the passage in which Aystah, feeling the thrills of coming motherhood, imagines that it is Hoosh coming back to her. To abbreviate such passages were vandalism, and to quote them in full I have not the space. I have laid principal stress upon other aspects of the book—upon the author's conception of god as "the birth of a vain supplication," an incarnation of man's worst passions, drawing its life from the degradation and death of its worshippers. At a time when large incomes may be derived from such trashy productions as *The Mighty Atom* or *The Christian*, it is comforting to pick up a book of such sterling literary merits and sound thinking as *Gods and their Makers*.

C. COHEN.

The Kaiser's Sensation.

THE German Emperor is a Christian. That is another way of saying that he has no intention of practising the doctrines of Jesus. He and Jesus would make an ill-assorted pair. If we could place on the head of Jesus the Kaiser's helmet, adorned with the silver eagle, the effect would be startling and incongruous. If we dressed the Emperor in the seamless robe, and set him amid a group of children, I doubt if he would know how to bless them. He would want to talk to the children about his grandfather and his army. No; Jesus and William have little in common, yet a strange destiny has enrolled the Kaiser among the professed followers of the travelling preacher of Galilee, and the Kaiser has lately gone on pilgrimage to the land made "holy" by the poor preacher's footsteps. On his return the Emperor made a speech, in which he referred to a sublime and most moving sensation which he had experienced when standing on the Mount of Olives. Thence he saw "at the foot of the mountain the place where the mightiest conflict ever waged on earth was fought out by a solitary champion—the battle for the redemption of mankind."

If Kaisers have such sensations as this, I have no wish to be a Kaiser, even for the bribe of a helmet with a silver eagle. For of what use is a magnificent helmet if the head inside it be filled with such confused ideas of human history as the German Emperor appears to entertain? I would sooner wear a cap of liberty.

I hardly know where to begin attacking the Emperor's theology. It is like trying to cut up a cloud; steel will not bite vapor; and the Kaiser's creed is no more substantial than the mist that hangs over the Brocken. "The mightiest conflict ever waged on earth"—whose earth? Was it God's earth, or the Devil's? If God made the earth good, and the Devil took possession of it, then it was not man who needed redemption, but God. And that, indeed, is the real problem for the theologians to consider. God's policy had failed, and his administration of the affairs of the universe had collapsed. The celestial government did not even resign; it was expelled. The Devil manifestly scored a victory in the Garden of Eden, and demonstrated the inherent weakness of God's method. What, then, could be more ridiculous than for theology to represent God as scheming how to snatch man from the clutches of the Evil One? It was a prisoner attempting to release a prisoner. It was the blind leading the blind. It was failure teaching the secret of success. Not man lost Paradise, but God. The curse fell upon God. He needed the Atonement, and men should have prayed, not to him, but for him. Now this is the one thing priests never do; they never pray for God's salvation; but, unless God be saved from the power of Satan and anarchy, how can he save mankind?

But let us assume this first difficulty is solved. Let us forget that a well-governed earth ought never to have been allowed to succumb to the forces of disorder. Somehow or other, the dominion had fallen into the hands of Satan, and mankind was enslaved. Now, if we asked a child what ought to be done in such a case, I expect the child would reply: "The slaves should fight." But, according to theology and the German

Emperor (perhaps I ought to say the German Emperor and theology), the slaves made no resistance at all. They left it to a deputy. They stood by like sheep while a solitary champion carried on "the mightiest conflict ever waged on earth." Now, when we think of Sedan, Waterloo, Hastings, Arbela, Marathon, and the like, we conclude that the engagement which took place "at the foot of the Mount of Olives" must have been a very vigorous duel indeed. I cannot help inferring that the terrific character of the combat which Christ waged was a tribute to the courage of the Other Person. Of course, if the Other Person (he deserves the capital letters) had stood quiet like the wineskins under Don Quixote's sword, there would have been no glory in spilling his blood. But the German Emperor admits there was a mighty encounter, which is another way of saying that the Other Person did his duty and kept loyal to his cause. I refuse to believe that an utter rascal ever has pluck enough to make a stout fight; and this affair at the foot of the mountain was the very stoutest of all stout fights. A valiant warrior may have bad qualities, but he cannot be completely worthless. Worthless creatures never can appreciate their own existence sufficiently to fight for it.

But I will let that question pass also. What I cannot clearly comprehend from his Imperial Majesty's statement is the attitude observed by mankind—by the people for whose benefit the conflict was waged at the foot of the mountain. The "mightiest conflict" must have created considerable tumult, if not at the time, at least when the facts were published in the Gospels. The incident concerned the world; because, says the Kaiser, the object of the battle was, on the one side, to preserve mankind in a subject condition; and, on the other, to set them free, or redeem them. But we are informed that Jesus was a solitary champion. The Kaiser has forgotten to tell us whether Jesus succeeded or not, and I am almost afraid to look round the world of 1899 lest my eyes should prove to me that the "mightiest conflict" had no very tangible result. After some 1900 years we find one emperor wearing a military helmet (the symbol of bloodshed) on the Mount of Olives, while another is scribbling rescripts in the hope of inducing the disciples of Jesus not to destroy one another with rifles or bombshells. Well, and how could theology or the Kaiser expect anything else? The Christian gospel made a mistake from the outset; or, at any rate, very soon after it was introduced. It announced the absurd doctrine that men had been, or were going to be, redeemed, by a "solitary champion," as if they were so many sheep transferred from one owner to another. But what are we to think of ourselves for permitting our salvation to be effected by somebody else? Was it not, is it not, our business to save ourselves? If we are not to strike a blow on our own behalf, where is the redemption? We simply change owners, and the slavery goes on as before. For that state is slavery in which men cannot think their own thoughts, work their own works, and cut their own path in a hostile universe. The "mightiest conflict" may go on for ever at the foot of the mountain, or over the mountain, or round the mountain, or in the middle of the mountain, and we poor serfs will be none the better for all the stiff blows exchanged if we merely stand by and gape. We must put on our own armor; certainly not the armor of God. We want no champions. Poltroons ask for champions, and get them, and remain poltroons. We want a race of champions; all men must be champions, all women must be champions, all children must be champions. What folly to suppose that the decisive conflict could occur at the Mount of Olives! It must take place wherever men eat and drink and labor and sleep; and every babe that breaks out of the womb must give challenge to the enemy. The "mightiest conflict," forsooth! The battle is scarcely begun. God—the child of primitive man—struck a feeble blow, and is dying. Jesus—the imperfect image in which Christianity expressed its ideal of humanity—struck a blow, and is retiring from the scene. Man's own manhood—woman's own womanhood—is now perceiving the awful, yet splendid, truth, that it must do for itself what God could not do, what Jesus could not do; it must, with its own foot, tread down error; with its own hand thrust out disease; and with its own fiery breath slay the damned spirit of injustice.

F. J. GOULD.

Profane Parables.

LV.—SABBATARIANISM.

THE barn owls fared well for mice till the cats got wind of it. Thenceforth the cats grew fat and comely, but the owls waxed very lean.

"Something must be done!" cried the hungry owls in conclave. And they passed a law forbidding cats to prowl o' nights, when rodents were abroad.

But the cats didn't quite see it.

LVI.—CAUSATION.

An empiric concocted a vile mixture, and called it medicine. And he persuaded some Tom-fools to drink thereof.

And he pointed to the few that survived, saying: "My medicine hath made them well."

"Possibly," said the sceptic. "But what of the many who are well without it?"

LVII.—REASON.

"Faith is higher than Reason," declared the dogmatist.

"Why?" demanded the inquirer.

And thereupon the dogmatist indulged in some dialectical gymnastics, and exerted his reasoning powers for all they were worth—to prove that reason was a thing accursed.

LVIII.—AILMENTS.

The physician was prescribing for various ailments.

And one came with a cold in his head and was cured. And another suffered from cancer in the stomach, and the physician alleviated his pains. Then followed a sad-faced man who said he had God in his heart.

"Next case!" cried the physician.

LIX.—TRADITION.

A congregation of portly pigs wallowed in malodorous mire.

"Disgusting!" said the believer.

"Doubtless," replied the sceptic; "but then they are true to the traditions of their kind."

LX.—PRAISE.

Once upon a time there was an ass who hee-hawed to the elements, and fancied they enjoyed it. So that, when the sun came out, he cried:—

"My music hath delighted him."

But when the rain fell he lamented, saying:—

"My voice hath something lacked in sweetness."

That was a long while since, but the ass was not without offspring.

E. R. W.

Obituary.

I HAVE to record the sudden death, on the 11th inst., of another Secularist veteran, at the age of seventy-five—Mr. John Netherwood. He was a "straight," sincere worker in the cause of Freethought, humanity, and progress. He was a devoted admirer of the late Charles Bradlaugh, and passionately fond of music. Forty years ago he was a teacher in the old Secular school at Huddersfield. Councillor Owen Balmforth—a former scholar of the deceased at the above-named school—conducted the funeral service, delivering an address and the beautiful Secular Burial Service with eloquence and pathos. We interred our late friend in the Huddersfield Cemetery on Wednesday, February 15, and his funeral was attended by a number of both old and young Freethinkers and workers for the principles of Secularism.—W. H. SPIVEY.

It is my sad and painful duty to record the death of William Todd, aged twenty-eight years, who passed away on Wednesday, February 15. Deceased was one of the few who helped to revive the Cheshire Branch of the N. S. S. Since that time he did his uttermost to spread the gospel of Freethought. The principles he upheld through life sustained him in the hour of death. Though his illness (typhoid fever) was only of a week's duration, he appeared to know his end was near, and requested to have the Secular service read over him. This was done by Mr. Percy Ward, who read Austin Holyoake's beautiful Burial Service to those gathered at the graveside, in a very impressive manner; this being the first occasion on which the Secularist service has been conducted in Chester. He was a true friend. His home was an ideal one, and he has left a wife and two dear little children, whom he idolised, to mourn his loss; and I have lost a dear comrade and friend.—J. FISK, Sec.

Acid Drops.

GAMBETTA, when he knew he was dying, said: "*Je suis perdu.*" This got translated literally into English as "I am lost," and as that phrase has often a religious significance, it was natural that a lot of fanatical ignoramuses should go about declaring that the great French Atheist declared he was a lost soul and felt sure he was going to hell. All that Gambetta really meant, and all that any Frenchman in such circumstances would mean, was: "It is all over with me, then; I am a doomed man." He was not alluding to a future life, but to the one which was closing.

The very same phrase was used by President Faure when he felt that the end was near, and *he* was not an Atheist. At least, he was not an avowed Atheist like Gambetta. Whatever his religious opinions were, his wife showed the customary feminine temper in such crises. She had an officer sent out into the street to bag a priest. A prison chaplain was run down—literally, for the officer scoured the street on a bicycle. This priest was almost dragged into the death chamber; and there, although the dying President was quite unconscious, the "last rites" were administered, and the head of the French Republic went off with a through ticket to the kingdom of heaven. It was a mercy that priest was found; otherwise M. Faure would have probably gone to the opposite establishment.

With feminine inconsistency, though perhaps with the natural logic of personal grief, Madame Faure was quite inconsolable when her husband was dead. She had made sure of his dying in the full odor of sanctity, but instead of rejoicing, or feeling tolerably serene, she shut herself in a room, and refused even the company of her children. Not that we mean to blame her for this. Our object is simply to point out how hollow are the consolations of faith at such a moment.

We have not yet done with the death of M. Faure. Not only did he say "*Je suis perdu,*" like Gambetta; he also said "*C'est fini,*" like Jesus Christ—for this is a literal French rendering of the cry, "It is finished," which the English Bible puts into the mouth of the dying Nazarene upon his Cross. What the crucified one meant by it has been explained by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Christian preachers. But none of them were inspired, and therefore all of them were guessing. Now guessing is open to everybody, and we hazard a conjecture of our own. In all probability, as we think, Jesus Christ meant exactly what President Faure meant—namely, "the end has come, I am verily dying."

No doubt the Christians will turn up their noses at this interpretation. But that will not affect our judgment. It is a common thing for superstitionists to find a mystical meaning in the commonest words. When the great Goethe was dying, he said: "More light!" It was getting dark, and his sight was failing, and all he meant was, "A candle or something." But how much windy rhetoric has been expended on that simple exclamation!

The natural sequel to Madame Faure's piety occurred in the French Chamber on Monday. M. Dejeante, a Socialist deputy, protested against the national funeral of M. Faure being a religious one. He declared that the nation ought not to mix itself up with such matters, and when he was freely interrupted he reminded his fellow deputies that M. Faure was a Freemason. This was a hit, a palpable hit, for all Freemasons are, as such, excommunicated by the Catholic Church. M. Chevillon, a Radical, next protested against the arrangement made, apparently to meet the wishes of Madame Faure, for the funeral procession to start from Notre Dame Cathedral. The widow's name was again invoked, even by Premier Dupuy; but by this time the Republicans had grown more than restive, and on the motion of M. Lanessan it was unanimously resolved that the Chamber of Deputies should meet the remains of the late President at the Elysée, and not at the Cathedral. Premier Dupuy discreetly accepted this resolution.

The latest "imperial" interference in Berlin is the strict regulation of street posters. Acting on a tip from the Kaiser, the police have declared that no posters will be allowed up which in any way offend moral or religious principles. This is elastic enough for anything.

The *Freethinker* discussion has continued to rage at West Ham. Another battle-royal was timed to take place in the Town Council on Tuesday evening (Feb. 14)—too late for a report in last week's *Freethinker*, which went to press on Wednesday morning, and was practically made up on Tuesday evening.

Meanwhile we may note that "a deputation of ministers of religion of all denominations" was to wait upon the Council and urge it to turn the *Freethinker* out of the Public Library. Amongst the men of God who are busily engaged in this

crusade is the Rev. Robert Nobbs, a Congregationalist. This gentleman has induced his congregation to pass a unanimous resolution, that the *Freethinker* "is a source of moral danger," which it certainly is if Christianity and Morality are identical, but not otherwise. The resolution further says that this journal "tends to corrupt the mind." But that need not trouble this particular congregation. They haven't much to corrupt. Finally, the resolution says that this journal "deeply wounds the most sacred feelings of a vast number of the inhabitants" of West Ham. Ay, there's the rub. The truth is out at last. It is these people's feelings—in other words, their religious prejudices—that are wounded; and all their talk about corruption is merely humbug to disguise their real motives.

Mr. Ben Tillett, writing in the West Ham *Herald*, seems to envy the *Freethinker* the advertisement it is getting. But why must he talk nonsense on the subject? "This is not an age," he says, "when the Atheists are at all wanted to fight down bigotry. The indifference of the masses is the greatest safeguard against that sort of thing." Indifference of the masses, forsooth! Why, their indifference is more an aid to the bigots than it is to the friends of liberty. Those who are not for freedom are virtually *against* it. Only those who speak out count. We might ask Mr. Tillett whether the indifference of the masses prevented the harrying of the Secularists by the police at Portsmouth, Hull, and Liverpool? Did it prevent the bigots, quite recently, from depriving the Birmingham Secularists of the use of public buildings, on all sorts of ridiculous and nefarious pretences? Mr. Tillett should really take the trouble to learn the facts, and have the courage to face them.

"Infidel" books are being objected to by the Catholics in the Cork Free Library. Of course the word "immoral" is used freely; with what honesty our readers may judge from the fact that the first book on the "infidel" list is Draper's *Conflict between Religion and Science*.

The Rev. W. C. Tutting, writing in the *Western Morning News*, complains that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes told a story at Plymouth to the discredit of a certain "young curate" of the Established Church, and that the Wesleyan President has taken no notice of his (Mr. Tutting's) letters asking for a substantiation.

The official organ of the London North-Central Mission thus records a sudden collapse of the Wesleyan President: "One week-night the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes went to open a very fashionable chapel in the North of London. The work not being quite complete, a little wooden structure had been erected in the elegant pulpit for the preacher to sit upon. Mr. Hughes finished his sermon in his passionate Welsh way, and dashed himself down on this improvised seat. The structure gave way, the preacher's head disappeared, and the preacher's legs went straight up, and a pair of white socks and boots met the astonished gaze of the congregation. Mr. Hughes picked himself up as quickly as he could, and glared at the congregation so ferociously that not a soul dared to laugh."—*Weekly Telegraph*.

The Rev. Evan Jenkins, Baptist minister, has been ordered by the Bridgend magistrates to pay ten shillings a week to his wife, who obtains a separation from him on account of his gross cruelty.

The *South Wales Democrat*, a paper which we hope is come to stay, says that Mr. Pritchard Morgan, who opposed Mr. Ffoulkes Griffiths in the Merthyr Boroughs, after the death of Mr. Henry Richard, was denied the use of Nonconformist chapels, while Nonconformist leaders denounced him as "one who does not fear God."

Two rival preachers got into one pulpit at the Inghamite Chapel, Winewell, Colne. As the congregation was also divided, the result was a bad squabble. One worshipper got a black eye, but nothing occurred to necessitate an inquest. Perhaps that is to come.

A poor benighted creature, formerly a nun in a German convent, is lying in a Chicago hospital with a number of needles in her body. She confesses that whenever she broke a rule of the convent she pricked herself with a needle as a penance, and at last fixed needles in the inner belt of her skirt-waist, where they would penetrate the flesh. Some of these needles disappeared internally, and hence her present condition.

The distressing famine in Oroomiah, Persia, is one of the many examples of the watchful care of Providence over all his works. The missionaries there acknowledge the receipt of some very small sums sent to alleviate the consequences of the Lord's neglect. "For which contributions," they say, "we heartily thank God." Naturally one inquires, if God goes out of his way to influence these wholly inadequate donations, why could he not have prevented, in the first instance, their need?

In the meantime hundreds of children are dying of starvation. The Lord is taking them to his bosom in batches.

A "converted" Jewess has just concluded a mission at Dumfries. Preaching on "the Lord's Coming," she expressed the conviction that we are "on the very Saturday night" of Christ's reappearing. That Saturday night has been a very long one, for the world has been at that same critical point any time for centuries and centuries past, and has stuck there.

This is the sickly, unctuous way in which a religious weekly comments on the marriage of Mme. Patti: "We should pray that the well-earned repose that she is now enjoying from her life of activity will be spent in reading and studying the life of Christ, and seeking to realise that peace which results from a heartfelt acceptance of Christ as our atoning Savior."

Is not this more than a little bit too "farrard"? Surely the Christian weekly might allow the new Baroness to get over her honeymoon before broaching this subject. There will be plenty of time to send a tract to Craig-y-nos. We may assume that, at any rate for a little period hence, she will be sufficiently engaged in a "heartfelt acceptance," not of Christ, but of the Baron Cederström.

Why will Nonconformists bury their dead in so-called "consecrated" ground? They deserve to be victimized, as they constantly are, by grasping clerical ghouls, who are always hovering about for their fees. Recently a Nonconformist family at Worcester buried a relative in a "consecrated" part of the cemetery. The rector, who rendered no service whatever, took £2 15s. of the £8 5s. charged as monumental fee for a gravestone. The *Christian World* gives other instances of similarly atrocious clerical rapacity.

What terrible neglect of the Lord's work! The United States only spends £1,000,000 annually on missions. The Rev. Dr. Lorimer is in despair over the miserable smallness of the expenditure. He finds that, on the other hand, the States spend £100,000,000 on theatres. What does this show? Probably nothing worse than that the Yankees prefer to spend money on amusing themselves than in providing amusement for the heathen.

Count Tolstoi does not think much of the Czar's peace proposals. He points out that, while the Czar was talking peace, he was ruthlessly persecuting the Dukhoborsti, or Russian Quakers, for refusing to serve in the army. Charming consistency! Its counterpart, however, may be found in Christian England, where the poor Peculiar are persecuted by law for carrying out Christian teaching.

Truth calls attention to the ridiculously inappropriate hymns which are often employed in connection with funerals and marriages. For instance, it says, a sybarite peer dies who has never done a stroke of useful work in his life. He is buried with the words ringing over his remains: "Now the laborer's task is o'er!"

The rector of Hemingsford Grey, while walking on the railway, was knocked down by an engine and killed. The men of God enjoy no greater immunity than sinners when a locomotive gets on their track.

The *Catholic Times* is behaving in a specially mendacious manner. It returns in its correspondence columns to the complaint that the Bethnal Green Free Library will not accept copies of its issues, though other journals of a sectarian character seem welcome enough. As we have said before, the refusal is a piece of stupid bigotry. And to this extent the *Catholic Times* should be supported in its complaints, though there is this difference between the Bethnal Green Free Library and that of West Ham—the former is supported by voluntary contributions, and the latter by rates.

If the *Catholic Times* confined itself to complaints about its own exclusion, it would be on safe ground. But it must needs, in this week's issue as in last, go out of its way to be unnecessarily offensive in regard to the *Freethinker* and the agitation at West Ham. It referred to this journal the other week as "blasphemous," and now it speaks of it as "an immoral journal." It employs the latter term in a paragraph laudatory of the deputation of Roman Catholic bigots who waited on the West Ham Town Council to ask for the exclusion of the *Freethinker*.

It further says that the *Freethinker* "outrages the common sense of Christendom." Where is the common sense of Christendom? So far as can be seen, it has no more real existence than veracity or consistency in the *Catholic Times*. A correspondent of that journal says the exclusion of Catholic literature from public libraries is mainly due to the fact that there are no Catholics on the Committees. It is probably a very fortunate thing that Catholic bigotry is not so represented. If it had any representative force, there would be

precious little else to be read than the silly superstitious rubbish in which Popery rejoices.

Just to show the tolerant spirit of these Romish bigots, take the following translation from *La Bandera Catolica*, published only a little time ago: "What a day of pleasure will that be for us when we shall see Freemasons, Spiritualists, Freethinkers, and anti-clericals writhing in the flames of the Inquisition." This translation appeared the other week in a Welsh paper, and the *Catholic Times* makes some show of repudiation. But the whole tone of its own contents goes to prove that this is exactly its spirit, in spite of all attempts at concealment.

Prayer does not appear to have much effect in arresting the plague in Bombay, which seems to be daily getting worse. The deaths in Bombay city in one week numbered 1,600. The natives may well ironically inquire what is the kind of influence the Christian missionaries have with their god.

A self-styled "infidel-slayer," appealing for funds, says that "Freethinkers are raising £1,500 per annum for the purpose of attacking Christianity." We must not contradict this Man of God. So to preserve his truthfulness—Freethinkers! hurry up with your subscriptions, and make them as handsome as possible. He ought to be able to say, when he next appeals, that we are raising quite £5,000 per annum. It will make it all the better for him and for us.

As we anticipated, the Sabbatarians have begun to howl at the proposal to permit rifle practice at Bisley on Sundays in the summer. The *Christian* says: "Those who would despoil us of the spiritual use of the Lord's Day have turned their attack in yet another direction. This resolution to use the ranges at Bisley was passed at a meeting held at King's College, a Church of England institution! Sunday excursions, Sunday concerts and amusements, Sunday trading, Sunday military practice, Sunday 'express' postal delivery—here are a few of the subtle channels in which the new spirit works." How sad!

The oath business is getting a little mixed in some of the London County Courts. The other day a Jew was sworn as a Christian, and the mistake was not discovered until his evidence was taken. Then there was recently a case in which a number of Jews were sworn, and, of course, put on their hats during the interesting formality. They were followed by some Christian witnesses, who, having watched the proceedings, put on *their* hats, assuming it to be the general custom at that court. The whole business of oath-taking is really getting a little bit too ridiculous to be much longer continued.

Little Dorothy Drew is said to have got the better of the late Mr. Gladstone in a Biblical discussion. One morning she refused to get up (bless her!), and when all other means had failed they sent grandpa to her. "Why won't you get up, my child?" he asked. "Why, grandfather, didn't you tell me to do what the Bible says?" asked Dorothy. "Certainly," he replied. "Well," she said, "it disproves of early rising; says it's a waste of time." The grand old Bibliolator was staggered; but little Dorothy got hold of her Bible and read out the second verse of the hundred and twenty-seventh Psalm, laying great emphasis on the first words, "It is vain for you to rise up early." She had him there.

Opinions differ in religious circles as to the value of the new Free Churches' Catechism. The Rev. Thomas Spurgeon says, "It is far too vague for me." On the other hand, the Rev. G. S. Barrett, who helped to concoct it, calls it a "monument of the unity of the evangelical faith." The Rev. C. F. Aked considers "the Free Church part of the catechism magnificent, but its theological part valueless." It is just as we said. The time has gone by when Christianity could be stated in a way to command general acceptance.

Gilcomston Free Church, Union-street, Aberdeen, was recently furnished with a handsome harmonium. This seems to have aroused the indignation of some fine old double-crusted Puritan, whom the police are endeavoring to discover. The holy zealot sneaked into the church by night, piled up a lot of Bibles and Hymn-books round the harmonium, poured some paraffin over them, and then kindled a bonfire. Happily, the cleaner entered in time to save the building from destruction, and the damage only amounts to about £100. The "miscreant" is still at large. If they catch him, he will probably be reading the Old Testament.

A remarkably outspoken article appeared recently in the *Peterhead Sentinel*. It astonishes us coming from that northern region. Dr. Stewart, a clergyman of the Presbyterian Established Church, has been saying that heaven and hell are not material places, but spiritual conditions; that Paul was liable to superstitious mistakes, like other men, and when he wrote about the third heaven and the seventh heaven he was writing nonsense; and that men should judge the Bible in detail by the exercise of their own reason. Whereupon the *Sentinel* says: "If human reason is to be the sole

court of appeal, the whole doctrine of the immortality of the soul—nay, the belief in the existence of God himself—must sooner or later give way before its unaided searchings." According to science alone, the *Sentinel* says, whether heaven be a place or a condition, there will be no inhabitants for it. "Human reason as against Holy Writ," it observes, "means Physical Science as against Divine Revelation; and physical science, so far as we are conversant with its teachings, goes to prove that cerebration, consciousness, ceases when the physical life ceases; that the death of the body and the extinction of the soul are coincident. That is where Reason, as against Revelation, takes us." The *Sentinel* slyly doubts whether Dr. Stewart "sees the far-reaching implications of the theory he has embraced."

The newspapers have been reporting the case of a woman in one of the Eastern counties who recovered her speech through a shock, after being for a long while dumb. This may give a key to some of the miraculous stories of the New Testament. "The dumb speak." Well, perhaps there was a case or two, like that of this modern Englishwoman. When the malady is *nervous*, a strong excitement will sometimes mitigate it, at least for a time; and there are few stronger forms of excitement than religious enthusiasm.

The *Woolwich Herald* is concerned about some Freethought leaflets it has received. We don't know what leaflets they are, for our contemporary is not specific, but it describes them as "shallow, ill-spelt, and ungrammatical." One of them, apparently, casts doubt upon the doctrine of a future life; and the *Herald* is severe upon those who would rob others of what is so comforting, even if it is a delusion. But we venture to suggest that sparing a falsehood, because somebody finds comfort in it, is a very questionable form of benevolence. Every criminal's wife and children find comfort in thinking him innocent, but that does not prevent his being accused, tried, and sentenced. We beg the *Herald* to press its own argument to a logical conclusion; if it does so, it will denounce Christian missionaries, who go all over the world seeking to rob the heathen of the consolations afforded by the religion of their childhood. Perhaps the *Herald* would reply that the missionaries give them something better in its stead. Well, we also reply that Freethought gives something better to Christians in place of what it seeks to destroy.

All the New York Courts are now being supplied with "hygienic Bibles." The covers of these books are composed of celluloid, which is kept clean and free from infection by frequent washing with disinfectants.

That is all very well as regards the outside of Holy Writ, but how are the contents to be "disinfected"? The Old Testament will take a lot of cleansing, and the New Testament opens with the story of a mysterious conception which is anything but "immaculate," and hardly the kind of narrative to be kissed.

De Witt Talmage explains in a recent sermon the cause of the "dead failures" made in various professions. The parents or the children, in making their choice, have failed to implore divine guidance. So, he says, "we have now in pulpits men making sermons who ought to be in blacksmiths' shops making ploughshares." True, quite true, Dr. De Witt; though you seem not to be conscious of a very personal application of the remark.

The Rector of Southchurch, who has just died in his ninety-first year, seems to have been a curious old joker. To his great displeasure, his son, also beneficed, favored Ritualistic practices. The son often asked his father to occupy his pulpit. Eventually the latter did so, and announced as his text: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic" (Matt. xvii. 15). On this he based a vigorous attack on his son's Ritualistic practices.

The Lord has allowed the Salvation Army Home Farm at Hadleigh to be seriously damaged by fire. Of course, he may have wanted to stir the Army supporters to the provision of a larger and better farm. It does seem, however, rather a bungling way to go about it—to waste what has already been found and paid for, when it was so easy to put it in the mind of some godly benefactor to provide another and a superior farm elsewhere, leaving the present one undisturbed.

Here is a chance for some of those poor sky-pilots who have abandoned all hopes of laying hold of the "loaves and fishes" monopolised by their luckier fellow-laborers in the Lord's vineyard. Ten pastors are wanted for ten vacant pastorates in Chicago, which have rich congregations. Candidates are only required to be brilliant, eloquent, affable, and liberal. Are the conditions too discouraging?

A new Evangelist writes home from Ireland: "Finished in Tullyrone on Wednesday night. A great victory for the Lord. There is a woman doing my washing for nothing. Bless the Lord!—Yours sincerely, B. SPENCE."

Writing to the *Contemporary Review*, Mr. Peek says the Bishops of London and Rochester know perfectly well at each ordination that some of the candidates are about to lie. Well, well; unless Mr. Peek is himself a liar, these men of God who are so ordained must make a very hopeful start on their work.

The *Christian Budget* retails a transparent lie about Colonel Ingersoll. It represents him as saying that "his idea of the government of childhood and the home is that you should let the child do as it pleases. Let it get up when it pleases in the morning; let it go to bed when it pleases at night; let it eat when it wants to, what it wants, and as much as it wants."

The Colonel, of course, never suggested the diminution of tyranny over little children in such extravagant terms as these. None but an idiotic Christian scribbler would put all these words in his mouth, with the hope that they would be credited by any fools less dense than himself. The latter part of the extract is too absurd for any sane parent to give utterance to—certainly not the Colonel.

After all the pious talk about Christianity and music, which pietists describe as the handmaid of religion, it is amusing to hear Sir Frederick Bridge, in his Gresham Lectures, state that some of the most devotional parts of Handel's "Messiah" were taken from Italian love duets.

Buddha's tooth—of course, a fictitious article—has been brought from Rangoon to Colombo. With it came thirteen hundred Burmese, of whom three hundred and seventy were priests. The apocryphal molar is enshrined in a precious casket worth £10,000. Its resting-place is to be the great Mahigawa Temple at Kanda, where it will attract a multitude of devotees. Evidently there is a strong likeness between Buddhism and Catholicism.

A conscientious objector under the Vaccination Act, who recently obtained an exemption certificate from Mr. Curtis Bennett at the Marylebone Police-court, said that "if God Almighty thought vaccination was necessary, or even desirable, he would have performed the operation before the child was born." And why for no? as they say in the North.

The prevailing opinion in Biddenden and the neighborhood is that Miss Peterson, the vicar's daughter, who shot Mr. John Whibley, is suffering from religious mania, contracted through constant contact with "fallen women" at Lady Somerset's Home in Surrey.

A citation has been served upon the Vicar of the Church of the Annunciation at Brighton to appear before the Consistorial Court. The citation has apparently to be exhibited at the church doors for ten days. But it is not allowed to stop there. It is carefully watched during the day, but the vicar's friends tear it down at night. Altogether it is a very pretty farce. The revolting parsons don't want to obey any law but that of their own caprices.

Mr. George Lihme, aged 54, a colonial merchant, shot himself dead in a first-class carriage at Battersea. In a letter to his wife he said it was better to die than to go mad, in which he was perhaps right. Still, he was not an Atheist, as, according to Talmage, he ought to have been. His letter ended with the sentence, "May God bless you and Mary."

Chatham and New Brompton people are apparently getting interested in Freethought. The Rev. W. H. Bowers has been preaching at St. Barnabas Church on the question, "Is Christianity Opposed to Freethought?" This gentleman argued that Christians were the only true Freethinkers. No doubt we shall live to learn that Christians are the only true Atheists.

We see that Mr. A. J. Waldron has been answering "Mr. Foote's lecture on the Bible" at New Brompton. Mr. Waldron did not hear the lecture, so his task was easy. Those who know the extent of Mr. Waldron's attainments—notwithstanding his amusing "Ph. D." degree, which is not recognised in England—will be able to smile at his opinion of Mr. Foote's "ignorance." But personalities were always the stock-in-trade of Christian Evidence lecturers, and Mr. Waldron only acts after the manner of his kind. It is rather funny, however, that he should send us a letter, as he did lately, deprecating the use of personalities on both sides, in the light of some of his platform utterances, when he feels safe, it reminds us of Satan rebuking Sin.

The desecration of the Mahdi's tomb has been the subject of a question in the House of Commons. It is admitted that the Mahdi's body was taken out and flung into the Nile. Of course there are all sorts of fine excuses advanced, but it was an act of savagery. All things seem to be regarded as fair and decent when civilised men fight barbarians, and especially when Christians fight Mohammedans.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 26, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London: 7.30, "The Catholic Church and the French Republic."

To Correspondents.

DURING Mr. Charles Watts's absence from England his address will be, c/o *Truthseeker* office, 28 Lafayette-place, New York City, U.S.A.

W. McDONALD.—The Rev. Dr. Stewart is filling his church because he puts some heterodoxy into his sermons. But he still talks much superstition. It is a childish notion that God made the grass green to be pleasant and grateful to human eyes. Darwinism shows us that it is not the environment which is adapted to the organism, but the organism that has to adapt itself to the environment, under penalty of elimination. Theologians always argue upside down.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued batches of cuttings.

LOUIS LEVINE.—Papers received with thanks.

H. ORGAN.—Pleased to hear you are doing such good work at Oxford by the distribution of Freethought literature. We are not surprised that the Revivalist at the Town Hall told his audience to put such literature on the fire. Christians who believe in hell have a lot of fire to spare. No doubt some of them, including this noble Revivalist, would like to burn the writers as well.

W. B. THOMPSON.—See paragraphs. What are the points you want us to give you information about? You do not state them. Mr. Foote will gladly run down for a week-night meeting, but it cannot be in the course of next week, as the strain of overwork is telling upon him, and he has arranged to spend a few days at the seaside, with a view to preventing a breakdown.

ABRACADABRA writes:—"I have just finished reading the *Book of God*, and the only fault I can find with it is that there is not more of it. This is, perhaps, inevitable, for some of the subjects dealt with would take almost a book to themselves to go thoroughly into them. You have, I must admit, said nearly all it is possible to say within so small a compass."

E. J. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph.

W. COX.—So far as the law is concerned—if it affects you at all, which we deny—the tickets are no shield. The Act expressly mentions tickets as illegal if charged for.

R. COOPER.—Mr. Forder has passed your letter over to us. Glad to hear you are so pleased with Mr. Foote's *Book of God*. We have read your tracts with interest. Our objection to Spiritualism is that it does not seem justified by unimpeachable evidence. Still, we have no quarrel with Spiritualists, many of whom are very good Freethinkers in their way.

M. E. PEGG.—See "Sugar Plums." No doubt your theory is correct, that the "valentine" rush at the Post Office was responsible for the delay of your lecture notice.

DR. KEELING has sent us his final reply to Mr. Cohen. It is too late for insertion this week, but will appear in our next issue. Dr. Keeling thanks us for the hospitality we have shown him.

W. H. MORRIS.—The Wheeler Fund has been, and is, in the hands of the honorary treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann. Reasons have existed, known to Mr. Foote as executor of Mr. Wheeler's will, for not transferring it hastily, and the delay has been (in his judgment) for Mrs. Wheeler's best interests. So much may be said now, since questions are asked; and a further statement, probably a final one, will be made very shortly. Meanwhile, it should be borne in mind that intending subscribers were told in the *Freethinker* at the outset that the disposition of the money would rest with Mr. Foote.

H. GARTHWAITE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

CROM ABU.—We cannot print, or give extracts from, anonymous letters.

E. PARKER.—Mr. Foote is most anxious to speak at West Ham as soon as possible. What hall is it that can be got for a Sunday afternoon? Kindly let him know at once.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Pleased to hear you have so judiciously circulated our Peculiar People pamphlet at Newcastle. Your letter is inserted. Send us the article you allude to when ready. See paragraph.

W. SMITH.—Mr. Forder has shown us your letter. Keep pegging away at the enemy.

H. SNELL writes: "I see from a report in the *Star* that West Ham is to be polled on the *Freethinker* question. I suppose this means that we shall lose, but some fight ought to be made. I am too unwell [we are very sorry] to undertake outdoor meetings, but I should be glad to help in any way possible. Could we not raise funds for the circulation of a manifesto in the district? It would be a splendid advertisement for the paper." This matter is dealt with at the end of our leading article. We thank Mr. Snell for his kind offer.

RECEIVED.—Woolwich Herald—Peterhead Sentinel—Liberator—Freethought Ideal—Aberdeen Journal—West Ham Herald—Public Opinion—Ethical World—Isle of Man Times—New York Journal—Bulawayo Chronicle—Progressive Thinker—Cork Constitution—South Wales Democrat—Bridgend Chronicle—Sydney Bulletin—People's Newspaper—Crescent—Two Worlds—Torch of Reason—Blue Grass Blade—New Century—Secular Thought—Flaming Sword—Buchan Observer—Boston Investigator—Libre Pensamiento—Lincolnshire Echo—Northern Daily Telegraph—Oxford Times—Der Arme Teufel.

D. CLARKE.—Glad you have found the *Book of God* "very interesting and instructive," and its arguments "sound and convincing." The book is selling well.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Received.

THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

AN excellent audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Byron, as Poet, Wit, and Freethinker." Mr. Thurlow occupied the chair. Mr. Foote lectures from the same platform again this evening (Feb. 26). His subject will be "The Catholic Church and the French Republic: a Lesson for Reformers." This ought to draw a crowded audience, in view of the death of President Faure, the election of President Loubet, and the present aspect of public affairs in France.

Ingersoll has been lecturing on the Devil. This is how the *New York Herald* puts it: "Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll wrestled with the Devil for an hour and a half last evening in the Academy of Music. A big assemblage attended the encounter, and applauded every bout."

A hostile letter on Colonel Ingersoll's lecture, signed Margaret Headley, was printed in the *Tribune*. It was a very feeble production, but the lady gave herself most astonishing airs of superiority, which the Colonel must have found very amusing. "Colonel Ingersoll," she said loftily, "is not a spiritual man." Of course she is a spiritual woman. That ends it. She is right and he is wrong. It doesn't want arguing. Fancy, though, what a way the Christian religion must be in when this lady's Sunday-school twaddle is gravely printed as a counterblast to Ingersoll's eloquence.

Mr. Cohen lectures for the Liverpool Branch to-day (Feb. 26) in the Alexandra Hall. Course tickets—priced at 1s. 6d. for four lectures and 6d. for one—will be necessary for admission. We presume they can be obtained on the premises.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, whose pen is represented for the first time in the *Freethinker* this week, lectured on Sunday, Feb. 12, in the Secular Hall, Manchester. It was his first visit, and the "saints" were anxious to see him. They gave him large audiences in spite of the rain, the evening meeting being packed to the doors. He had a most enthusiastic reception.

The foregoing paragraph ought to have appeared in our last issue, but the Manchester secretary's letter did not arrive until Wednesday, when we were going to press. Mrs. Pegg's letter was dated Feb. 13, but the Manchester postmark on the envelope (which we returned to her) was very plainly "14." Perhaps the letter was delayed in transmission. Unfortunately, it also contained an announcement of Mrs. Bonner's lectures for last Sunday, which was too late for insertion.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner delivered two lectures in the Manchester Secular Hall on Sunday. She had good audiences and a hearty welcome. Friends were present from several neighboring towns.

The Camberwell Branch is starting a Debating Class. It opens on Saturday evening, Feb. 25, at 7.30. Mr. W. A. Moss, a Christian, speaks first on Christianity and Secularism, and an interesting discussion is expected. We are informed that Mr. Herbert has been elected vice-president of this Branch.

The East London N. S. S. Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday, Mr. J. F. Haines presiding. The report showed that 150 lectures were delivered under the auspices of the Branch last year. In connection with this work Mr. Loafer was accorded a hearty vote of thanks for his constant devotion. Another hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the

various lecturers, particularly for their services at the Limehouse demonstrations. The secretary was instructed to arrange for Sunday lectures during the summer at Mile End, Limehouse, and Stratford. Mr. G. J. Warren, who has acted as honorary secretary and treasurer since 1885, asked for a volunteer for his post, as he had so many other engagements. The only response was "sincere thanks for past services, and please continue at the same salary"—with which request Mr. Warren happily complied. Thanks were also voted to the editor of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. E. J. Chapman, 20 Derby-street, Oxford-street, Manchester, a member of the N. S. S. Branch, has been asked by the Committee to organise a cycling club in connection with it. All who are willing to join should communicate with him. Mr. Chapman will be glad to hear from any other "Secular" Cycling Clubs, if there are any.

The Newcastle Branch holds a special members' meeting to-day (Feb. 26) at 1 Grainger-street, at three o'clock. We hope there will be a good attendance. Mr. J. G. Bartram, the secretary, is anxious to see Secular propaganda revived in that populous district. His address is 117 Morley-street, Heaton, if any reader of this journal wishes to see or communicate with him.

A meeting of Battersea Freethinkers will be held on Monday, Feb. 27, at eight o'clock, at 277 Battersea-park-road (side door), for the purpose of re-organising the local N. S. S. Branch. All are earnestly invited.

The *Newcastle Evening News*, noticing Mr. Foote's "Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills," says that "his contention will be admitted by all reasonable people to be unassailable."

Canon Shuttleworth on Secularism.

DR SHUTTLEWORTH, rector of St. Nicholas-Cole Abbey, City, has been giving a series of Sunday afternoon lectures on the various movements of the day. On Sunday, February 12, his subject was "Secularism." The church was lit with electric light, and the good, though not crowded, congregation had nothing to complain of in the matter of comfort. After a brief prayer, the preacher tackled the subject. Was Secularism, he asked, a movement demanding attention? Yes. Had it receded? No. The work of Secularism was apparent all round. He agreed with much of the Secularists' program. They had done a good work by drawing the Christians' attention to this world, with a view to making it better. He had been much amongst the Secularists fifteen or twenty years ago, and found them much above the average of the middle class and working men. Many were teetotallers. They spent some of their spare money on books. But, unfortunately, they always seemed to take a wrong view of the Bible. They assumed it was all inspired, and that all its contents were of equal value. They failed to notice its parabolical and allegorical meanings. Dr. Shuttleworth gave some reminiscences. He once heard Mrs. Besant say she would soon tire of the music promised in heaven. Once he saw a Christian young man mount the platform after one of Mr. Bradlaugh's lectures. The story of Jonah and the whale came up for discussion. The young man was asked if he believed it. He said Yes, because it was in the Bible. Mr. Bradlaugh asked him if he would believe that Jonah swallowed the whale if the Bible said so; and the simple young man said he would. Dr. Shuttleworth attended plenty of meetings in the old days, but now his work lay in a different direction. He had spoken at a meeting in St. James's Hall to protest against Mr. Foote's imprisonment. He did not like the pictures in the *Freethinker*, but he was opposed to injustice and persecution. Dr. Shuttleworth wound up his short address, which was delivered in a kind and courteous manner, by paying a tribute of respect to the life and labors of Mr. Bradlaugh, in the course of which he said that the Secularists were right in their affirmations, but wrong in their denials!

A. J. H.

Appropriate Music.

A travelling showman recently said: "I took out a tableau show some time ago, and I had some queer experiences. We always had trouble getting suitable music, for one thing. I remember that we struck one town where the music was furnished by a seedy, freckle-faced young man, who officiated at a wreck of a piano. I asked him if he could think of music appropriate to each picture as it was displayed. 'Certainly he could, and do it impromptu.' The performance opened. He was seated at the piano, and he turned to look at the first tableau. It was a representation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Like a flash he turned and began pounding out, 'There's Only One Girl in This World For Me.'"

Messieurs Much-Afraid.

THE world of thought is peopled by many Mr. Much-Afraids and Mr. Fearings, who all belong to the great family of Do-Littles. They are often well-informed and well-intentioned thinkers. Their principal weakness is an abnormally-developed circumspection, which not only forbids open avowal, but checks private and anonymous action. They seem to formulate in their minds an exaggerated estimate of the strength of their environments, conjuring up a thousand ghostly fears that a little examination would speedily dispel.

It is not, of course, for us to say of them anything that has even the semblance of being harsh or unkind. Probably few of us have made so many self-sacrifices for principle as to entitle us to cast stones. Furthermore, we must remember that not everyone feels that he has a mission to be a hero or martyr, even for cherished convictions. Aloofness may not mean cowardice, though at times it looks uncommonly like it. Silence may arise from other causes than the lack of a desire to speak. Nevertheless, when all allowances are made, is it not a fact that there are many Mr. Much-Afraids who might be in the front rank of the battle if it were not for the fear of perils which mostly exist in their imaginations?

Why especially should anyone who has embraced the principles of Freethought hang back as though he were a Mr. Much-Afraid, when in the present day he might, in the majority of cases, proclaim himself from the house-tops with little fear of serious consequences?

The atmosphere of controversial thought has undergone many remarkable changes for the better in recent times. Bigotry still makes furtive bites—several special instances are engaging the attention of the Freethought party at the present moment—but the gums of bigotry are toothless. The temporary triumphs of that malevolent principle are worse for it than its defeats. The ultimate and inevitable effect of its feeble efforts is to accelerate the movement it hopes to impede. Its only achievement is to frighten the Mr. Much-Afraids into the background, and to shut the mouths of the Mr. Fearings. Even that is a game of theological "spoof" that may be played a little too often in these modern times.

Freemasons have signs—which, by the way, are now pretty well known to the world—whereby they recognise each other. If there were some such means of recognition and introduction amongst Freethinkers, what unexpected approachments might ensue? There is, say, Smith with whom you have some business relationships, but of whom, apart from these, you know nothing at all. A chance word on some current topic may reveal an agreement in regard to Freethought previously undreamt of. But the chance word may never be dropped, for supposed prudential reasons, and you go on your separate ways oblivious of the ties of intellectual fraternity which might otherwise be cemented.

Suppose every Freethinker, latent and active, in the United Kingdom were at some given time to openly declare himself. Is it not safe to surmise that there would be disclosed such an array of opponents to theology as would strike dismay in the priestly camp? We hear, as it is, many clerical wails as to "widespread infidelity," but there is good reason to believe that the Christian Church is still in blissful ignorance of the full extent of the forces by which, at any time, she might find herself assailed.

In numbers there is an inspiration to intrepidity. It may be that the Much-Afraids are often alarmed at each other, as men groping independently in the dark. A little light might reveal friends in the supposed foes, and so many of them, too, as to dissipate all fear of the common enemy, and supply an incitement to a combined attack.

Anyway, without insisting on open proclamation in cases where it is deemed undesirable by those who are chiefly concerned, and who, after all, must be the judges, are there not many avenues open even to such as shrink most from publicity to still assist in the work of mental emancipation and the spread of advanced ideas? These ways and means do not need to be specified to readers of the *Freethinker*. Only to mention one, there is the newly-formed Secular Society, Limited,

which has special claims on the friends of progress and rational thought. Is it too much to hope that Free-thinkers who do not otherwise find it practicable to identify themselves with the movement may avail themselves of the confidential facilities afforded by that carefully-fashioned and now firmly-established organisation?

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Higher Criticism Criticised.

The Book of God in the Light of the Higher Criticism. With Special Reference to Dean Farrar's New Apology. By G. W. FOOTE. (London: R. Forder.) 1899.

An eminent Nonconformist divine recently asserted that "the Higher Criticism has drawn the fangs of the Secularist lecturer." Mr. Foote's *Book of God* demonstrates that the "fangs" are not drawn, they are newly sharpened; and in the ears of the Secularist rings the apocalyptic command, "Arise! Devour much flesh!" (Dan. vii. 5). The old orthodoxy was vulnerable, but the New Criticism has thrown aside the ancient armor, and left theology unprotected and indefensible.

Even the clergy cannot escape the influence of their environment. They cannot decently ignore the ascertained facts of modern science and modern research. They cannot preach the old exploded dogmas to congregations of educated people who have absorbed the newer light and culture. Therefore, theology must be trimmed and modified and made acceptable, even at the cost of its most essential features; and this is the task essayed by Dean Farrar in his new work on *The Bible: Its Meaning and Supremacy*. Whatever may be new in the Higher Criticism itself, there is nothing new in the style of ecclesiastical writing. We have the same rhetoric, the same floundering, the same juggling with truth which has always characterised the clerical world.

The Dean tells us that the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy never formed part of Christian belief! Then who taught the doctrine? Why have dozens of divines penned libraries of books to prove that there was not, and could not be, any error in the Bible? Why does Dean Farrar, on page 42, exult that only one single theological professor in Germany "still believes" in the inerrancy of Scripture, if that doctrine never formed part of the belief of Christians?

The Dean tells us that the Bible does not teach science! And then (p. 149) he enumerates a number of well-known books, ranging in date from A.D. 540 to 1696, which were written with the express object of formulating the teachings of the Bible on scientific matters.

The Dean holds up for condemnation (p. 196) the state of the Church in the sixteenth century, when "the current systems of belief in many points were drawn, but from Peter Lombard, the sophist Aristotle, and the Mohammedan Averroes"; forgetful that his own book is saturated with the teaching, not of the oracles of God, but of Charles Darwin, Thomas Paine, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill.

On such a book and on such an advocate Mr. Foote focuses the light of clear logic and healthy reasoning. He caustically reviews the Dean's stale and secondhand commonplaces of criticism; the straining out of gnats and swallowing of camels; the pretended frankness and real concealment which characterise the whole production. According to Dean Farrar, the greater part of the Bible was published to the world under false pretences. Jewish priests put forward their own inventions as the ancient laws of Moses, and edited and re-edited those laws to suit their own personal interest and convenience. Poets, whose rhapsodies were not appreciated, labelled them with the names of David and Solomon, so as to persuade ignorant people to read them, under the mistaken idea that they were perusing the poems of their ancient kings. History was re-written, in order to exalt the importance of the priesthood; and prophecies were freely manufactured after the event. Yet Dean Farrar does not wish us to reject these fables and forgeries; he calls on us to reverence them as "containing" the Word of God. He asks us to believe that a just and righteous deity deliberately chose these concoctions as the vehicle of his communications to man. Mr.

Foote examines the Rev. Dean's thesis step by step, shows up the immorality and irrationality of it all, puts his finger on every fallacy, and unveils every absurdity. With pitiless logic he pursues the Dean's assertion that the Bible itself is not the Word of God, but only *contains* the Word of God. He demonstrates the "ridiculous legerdemain" involved in thus juggling with words, and pertinently asks: If the Bible enshrouds the true Word of God, how are we to separate God's word from man's word? For this Dean Farrar offers nothing but the vaguest generalities; and, as Mr. Foote remarks, in a case of such importance it is the bounden duty of the clergy of all denominations to unite together in publishing an edition of the Bible in which the divine and human parts are clearly indicated by being printed in different types. The Dean tells us that inspiration has not ceased; that the spirit of God is still at work in the hearts of those who serve him; and, therefore, we may rejoin that it should be perfectly possible to settle for our generation, if not for ever, what parts of the Old and New Testaments were divinely inspired, and what parts were human falsehoods.

To surrender the Bible involves the surrender of Christianity. Christianity is founded upon the Bible; and, apart from the Bible, it has no claims and no justification. Christianity rests upon the authority of the New Testament, and the New Testament rests upon the authority of the Old Testament. When, therefore, a Christian advocate condemns the Old Testament, he is cutting away the ground from under his own feet. This obvious truism forms the strongest part of Mr. Foote's examination of Dean Farrar's position. If the Old Testament be chiefly a conglomeration of human forgery and fraud, why did Jesus Christ and his Apostles so constantly appeal to it in support of their doctrines? The incarnate deity came down on earth, and manifested his powers by miracles. He spoke to multitudes "as one having authority, and not as the scribes," and yet never uttered one word of warning as to the true character of the so-called writings of Moses and the Prophets. So far from this, "we have Jesus Christ's testimony to three documents as having been written by men who did not write them, and to the historical character of three incidents which are purely fabulous." Not merely do the New Testament writers appeal to the Old Testament as a record of actual history; they expressly declare it to be divinely inspired. Hebrews iii. 7 cites the 95th Psalm as the words of the Holy Ghost. Acts xxviii. 25 informs us that the prophet Isaiah spoke the sentiments of the same member of the Trinity. And Mark xii. 36 tells how David himself, under divine influence, wrote the 110th Psalm, a production which the Higher Critics ascribe to Simon Maccabeus. It is therefore absolutely futile for Dean Farrar to imagine that he can fall back upon the New Testament, when the New Testament expressly bases itself upon the Old Testament, which the learned Dean denounces.

Another important chapter of Mr. Foote's book is devoted to the fictitious supremacy which Dr. Farrar claims for the Bible. At the beginning of his work the Dean says: "To the Buddhist, the incidents, whether real or legendary, in the life of the Buddha Sakyamuni furnish a theme of endless interest; the Chinese are never tired of even the dry and uneventful records of the biography of Kung-foo-tze"; and then he calmly asks us to see something remarkable in the praises bestowed by Christians upon their own sacred book! He thinks it remarkable that people, brought up under Christian influence, should express any admiration for the Bible, the text-book of Christianity. He cannot quote any Mohammedan who praises the Bible, nor any Christian who praises the Koran. Mr. Foote points out that most of the people cited by Dr. Farrar had entirely different views upon the sacred volume to those of the eminent ecclesiastic. With a sly humor he points out that witnesses to character are only heard in mitigation of sentence after the jury has returned a verdict of "Guilty," and suggests that this idea may have been in Dr. Farrar's mind. More grimly humorous are Mr. Foote's remarks on the Dean's list of martyrs whose deaths were recalled by the Bible. As the men who put these martyrs to death were Christians also, the Holy Book told as well on one side as the other. The "supremacy" of the

Bible is entirely due to civil authority, vast endowments, clerical organisation, and clerical control of the centres of education; without these it would speedily sink to its true level. Even now professed Christians base their lives and conduct upon other ideals, and when feeble fanatics like the Peculiar People attempt to honestly carry out its precepts they are committed to prison and to judgment by their "fellow-believers."

With the "Higher Criticism," as criticism, we are perfectly in agreement; it is only a systematisation of well-known Freethought views of the Bible, and it has by no means touched finality. The Book has been opened, Criticism has been crowned, and has gone forth conquering and to conquer. Our disagreement is with those who think to combine the new views with the old dogmas. Mr. Foote's *Book of God* is not only a thorough-going exposure of the weakness and folly of Dr. Farrar's position, but also a manual for dealing with this phase of theological trimming. The Freethinker will study it for guidance and information; the orthodox will learn from it how completely the sceptical standpoint has been forced upon the cultured clergy; and the "advanced Christian" will find from it that he has not strengthened his case by abandoning his old tenets, but has reinforced the arguments of the unbeliever. CHILPERIC.

Secular and Religious Therapeutics.

It is not every day that we have so charming an illustration of the advance of the Secularist principles as in the account of the recent outbreak of the plague in Turkestan. Anzop, a large mountain village in that country, was sanctified by the presence of a very holy personage of the familiar insanitary type. This saintly fakir recently returned to his village, after a long pilgrimage to the holy places of Turkestan and Afghanistan, with considerable treasure in the form of the coverings of the tombs of saints. He gave them to a widow to cut up into small pieces for the faithful to wear as amulets. She died of the plague, contracted in her holy occupation, a few days afterwards. The woman who had nursed her, and several others who had visited her, died with the same symptoms. The mischief might have ended here, but the pious fakir, apprehensive of sceptical inferences from the sad occurrence, declared that the deaths were a punishment for not having buried the body in the position prescribed by the sacred books. So the body was exhumed and re-buried in orthodox fashion. After this act of expiation, strange to say, the plague recommenced. In a short space of time there were 381 cases of plague out of a population of less than 600, and no less than 378 of them proved fatal. We are not informed that the pious fakir was amongst the number.

The development of common sense has proceeded much more rapidly, on the whole, in the Western world than in the East. Europeans have come to the conclusion that the application of celestial therapeutics is very precarious; the divine art of healing must at least be strongly reinforced by scientific treatment. Sanitary inspectors are told off to watch sacred wells and springs, and eccentric people who still hanker after celestial therapeutics are lodged in gaol.

So when the Russian authorities at Samarkand heard of the disaster which the holy fakir and his holy relics had introduced, they sent down a contingent of scientists—the majority, probably, Atheists—with a supply of Dr. Haffkine's prophylactic-unblessed. After much coaxing, the whole of the survivors were inoculated. There were no new attacks, and the last death occurred four days after Dr. Lieven's arrival. But the cost of the relics was not yet complete. Every house in the village had to be thoroughly disinfected. Every man and woman had to have a bath, and that cost, besides the solution of sublimate, a rouble to each person as a bribe to submit to the heathenish practice of bathing. Every rag in the place was burned—including, we doubt not, the holy relics—and the government had to provide three new outfits to each individual. The large stock of wool in the village was also burned and paid for.

Journalists do not fail to comment on the "romance of science" which is embodied in the episode. But there is another principle exhibited in it which the

ordinary journalist is not at liberty to dwell upon. It brings out to perfection the enormous advance of the Secularist principle in the Western world; the exclusion of the supernatural from secular matters. There is still so much superstition—not merely honest religious belief, but rank superstition—around us that one is apt to question that advance sometimes. The Turkestan episode, so very similar to the small-pox episode in Canada a few years ago, helps us to realise it. From province after province of secular life and thought the exclusion of the supernatural has been slowly but surely proceeding.

The material universe was once full of a supernatural element, filling up its gaps and imperfections, even in the mind of Newton. Even by the beginning of this century, when Laplace was asked by Napoleon where God came in in his scientific construction of the heavens, he could reply: "Sire, I have managed without that hypothesis." Fifty years ago Paleyism still cast a theological glamor over the universe; to-day Paleyism is as dead as—Daniel. Science after science has filled up the gaps in the mechanical conception of the universe, excluding spiritual forces and supernatural interference, until to-day the world stands out as a self-contained whole, magnificent in its material unity and the simplicity of its forces. Then the same circumstances befel the sacred books of religions and the histories of the religions themselves. History, archæology, and philology have gradually reduced the supernatural element, and pointed out the sufficiency of natural and human agencies to account for them.

It was an easier matter, comparatively, to expel the supernatural element from sciences that were more directly concerned with human life. After years of struggle anatomists and doctors expelled it from the realm of medicine. As late as the commencement of the present century certain new medical remedies were violently denounced by the clergy as "an encroachment on the divine prerogative." To-day they sit silent whilst "peculiar" people are put in gaol for appealing to the "divine prerogative." And so it has been with one branch after another of secular thought and practice. The clergy fought strenuously for the retention of the supernatural element. Scientists wore out their lives in opposing it, and the result has been a signal triumph of the Secularist principle.

Mankind has awakened at length to a resentment of the encroachments of its spiritual guides. From the primitive and crude fables which arose in the infancy of the race there have been elaborated huge structures of theology. From the primitive medicine men who were appointed by their fellows in ages of dense ignorance there have sprung innumerable priesthoods of increasing arrogance and ambition. Ten centuries men submitted with an amazing servility to their pretensions. Priesthood quickly evolved into priestcraft. The province of the supernatural grew, until there was scarcely a single corner of human life which was administered on purely secular principles. Even the luxury of war could not be indulged in without theological sanctions (which were never withheld) and a plentiful sprinkling of holy water. Curiously enough, war is one of the last branches of human (or inhuman) conduct in which the ecclesiastical invader still lingers.

The revenge of time came swiftly and generously. From science and art, from economics and politics, from education and all civic and social relations, the ecclesiastical influence has been rapidly and firmly excluded. Religious ministers are gradually retreating once more within the bonds of the sanctuary—to the conspicuous advantage of the many provinces of secular life from which their conservative and paralysing power has departed. Someone has caricatured the god of Victor Hugo as a venerable old man who retired from work after setting the machinery of the world in motion, and sits enthroned in an easy chair somewhere, at a sufficiently safe distance from the abode and the affairs of mankind. The old philosopher, Epicurus, had a similar idea of the inactivity of the Deity. It would seem that the idea is approving itself very widely to the modern world. There seems to be a quickly growing suspicion of the futility, or at least the insecurity, of prayer as a panacea for human ills, and a determination to exploit more fully the sources of good which are found within the confines of human life itself.

One feels a natural satisfaction at this growth of the Secular or Secularist principle in human affairs. The more keenly men are bent on limiting the sphere of the supernatural, so much the more easily should they come to realise the mythical character of the foundations of the whole supernatural structure. Unfortunately, there is another way of looking at the problem, and hence it is that this humanising of life does not help on the progress of Freethought as effectively as first thoughts would lead us to expect. The fact is, that when men have confined their priests within the four corners of their sanctuary, and have removed their Deity to a convenient isolation from the affairs of this life, religion becomes a matter of little concern to them. Why trouble oneself about a purely speculative question? Once religious influence is forbidden an entrance into secular counsels, and prevented from continuing to hinder the material and social progress of the race, why should one wage so keen a war about the truth of its pretty stories? That is an attitude which one finds very largely taken up at the present day, and it explains to a great extent the apathy of so many who cannot but read the lesson of the time-spirit. The work of the militant Freethinker is far from drawing to a close. This only consolation do we find in the change which has come about: the religious problem has been considerably simplified, and a concentration of critical forces upon the lingering elements of theology should yield rapid and generous results.

J. McCABE.

Book Chat.

Hymns of Worship, by Malcolm Quin, is a neat little volume, price ninepence, published at the Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Mr. Quin is the "minister" of that Positivist Church, and these hymns are designed for use in such an organisation. They are marked by fine feeling and graceful expression, though perhaps the poetry is somewhat abstract for the average man, and still more so for the average woman. But hymnology in the service of Humanity is only in its infant stage; it will have to grow and develop like the hymnology of the Christian faith; and when it reaches comparative perfection the modest effort of Mr. Quin will probably not be forgotten. There is a hymn for each month of the Positivist calendar, one for the Festival of All the Dead, and more than thirty others relating to various aspects of Positivist religion. We should like to see this little volume on the bookshelves, or, better still, in the hands, of many Freethinkers. They will derive nothing but intellectual and moral profit from its careful perusal.

Messrs. Chatto & Windus now publish a new and cheap edition at 2s. of Ambrose Bierce's ("Dod Grile") *In the Midst of Life*. It is gratifying to find this caustic genius appreciated by the general public.

That very-much-advertised and over-rated book, *Robert Elsmere*, is also to be obtained at the modest price of sixpence. It is the worst book Mrs. Humphry Ward has written; but, owing to Mr. Gladstone's attention, it laid the foundation stone of her reputation, which she has since justified by excellent work.

Mr. Edward Carpenter's numerous admirers will be delighted to hear that Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein and Co. have just issued a pocket edition of *Towards Democracy*, in three volumes, with a case, at four-and-sixpence nett, or in separate volumes at one-and-sixpence each.

We have received vol. ii. of the *Adult*, edited by Henry Seymour, handsomely bound in cloth (The Bijou Press, 51 Arundel-square, London; post free 5s. 6d.). This volume is full of interest, and includes contributions from such well-known writers as Edward Carpenter, Maurice Maeterlinck ("the Belgian Shakespeare"), George Bernard Shaw, and Havelock Ellis. The book is not so complete as the editor and his readers could have wished, as the Scotland-yard gentlemen took possession of all the earlier issues of this truly unconventional journal; but still the numbers bound together form a tolerably thick volume. Mr. Seymour is to be congratulated on the satisfactory way he has edited the *Adult* during a most trying period of its existence.

If any of our readers are suffering from an attack of pessimism, the best cure will be a copy of the new sixpenny edition of Sir John Lubbock's *Pleasures of Life*. Such optimism as Sir John's is extremely rare nowadays.

Mr. George Redway will shortly publish *The Reminiscences of Robert Buchanan*. This book should prove most interesting and lively reading, for Mr. Buchanan was ever a fighter. A few articles from his pen of an autobiographical nature, which appeared some years ago in the London *Echo*, and of which we have a pleasurable recollection, makes us look forward with expectation to this forthcoming publication.

* * *

Those people who are continually asserting that Free Thought and Free Love work in double harness will do well to read Mr. Orford Northcote's pamphlet, *Ruled by the Tomb* (The *Adult* Office, 51 Arundel-square, London). This pamphlet, written by an avowed free lover, conclusively shows that there is a real antagonism between the Secularists and the Free Lovers. Unintentionally, Mr. Orford Northcote has done us a real service by his venomous attack on the Secularists, and we hope that the pamphlet will be read widely.

Correspondence.

OUR PROPAGANDA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your brilliant and, withal, timely leader on "Our Propaganda," in your issue of Feb. 12, seems to suggest the opportuneness of the present moment for a kindly reminder to some of our brother and sister Secularists that inability to swallow the evil-curing pills of Christian quackery does not necessarily involve the ability to cure all the ills, or what they deem to be such, of present-day conditions of life.

Your justly severe remarks anent the "Free Lovers" are equally applicable to a section of Secularists who, lacking the small amount of courage of the anti-marriageites, in Yankee parlance, go for the whole fabric of civil life, and are very wrathful because they are not able to monopolise the Free-thought platform and press in their down-with-everything-that's-up campaign, and as a cheap medium of advertisement for their own cure-all nostrums.

Not a few of these latter worthies are just as bitter in their antipathy to science when it happens to run counter to their fads as any bigoted priesthood ever knew how to be; this is especially true of their attitude towards political economy. The work that a Hobbes, Collins, Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh, in the main, devoted their great abilities to, that a Huxley was proud of having put his hand to, is not great enough to afford sufficient scope for the talent of these would-be builders of a new civilisation. These are truly the "fool friends" of our movement who rouse the popular ire to bar its way.

Having been a close observer of our movement, and a most attentive listener to its advocates, professional and otherwise, during the past thirty years, I avail myself of this opportunity of testifying to the highly refined culture that has invariably characterised their discourses. But during the whole of this period there is not a name that is dear to every genuine Freethinker that I have not heard contemned on the score of coarseness, and this, too, by avowed Secularists. Those complaints I have never found backed up by one solitary sample of the vulgarity complained of. But I gather, sir, that in this matter of samples you have been more favored than myself, for you have had the complaints accompanied with instances of the faults complained of.

May I conclude by expressing my most fervent hope that ladies and gentlemen of such commanding influence and such highly valued and distinguished services to Secularism as Mr. Gimson, of Leicester, will not be slow in acting up to your suggestion as to applying the needful pressure to those of our representatives who show any signs of forgetting it, that by making use of any improper expression they are doing injury to, in lieu of service to, the party which has engaged them, and so add to the many solid claims that they (those ladies and gentlemen) have already upon the gratitude of the Secular party?

T. J. THURLOW.

SECULAR ADVOCACY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Perhaps you will allow me, as one of the young men who have taken an active interest in the propaganda of our movement for the past ten years, during which period I have attended, with one or two exceptions, every lecture under the auspices of our Society in Newcastle and district, to say that, so far as my experience goes, I have not yet heard any such "rough remarks" to warrant the prominence given by yourself to the censure of Mr. Gimson, or the admission by Mr. Snell that "there is, no doubt, much ground for the complaint by Mr. Gimson." On the contrary, I feel constrained to complain of an apparent weakness on the part of some of our lecturers, whom I have heard prate concerning "the traditions that cling to so grand a personality as that of Jesus," and of the morality taught by one whom Rationalists in general do not believe ever existed, except in the diseased imagination of pietists.

J. G. BARTRAM

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Catholic Church and the French Republic."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): February 25 and 26, at 8.30 p.m., Lyric Musical Comedy Co. in Grand Pantomime, "Babes in the Wood."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Professor W. A. Moss, "Christianity and Secularism Compared: From a Christian Standpoint."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, H. Snell, "Morality and Religion."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 10.45, Discussion on "The Judgment of the Dead"; 7, F. J. Gould, "The Unrest of the Age."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Professor Robert Adamson, "Scientific Basis of Morality."

WEST LONDON SECULAR CLUB (15 Edgware-road): A Parliament every Tuesday at 8. March 2, at 8.15, Mr. Pack, "The Ideal Speaker."

WINCHESTER HALL (33 Peckham High-street): February 29, at 8, A Debate between R. P. Edwards and S. Hale on "Christianity or Secularism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Messrs. Edwards, Heaford, Pack, and Davis.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Vocal and Instrumental Concert.

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. McCrum; 6.30, A. C. Holm, "Economics of Imperialism."

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row). Thursdays, at 8.30, Elocution Class. 7, G. T. Brown, M.B.G., "Is Christianity Played Out?"

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): Gustav Smith, "The Waste of our Natural Resources."

LEICESTER SECULAR CLUB (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Joseph McCabe, "The Progress of Religious Philosophy."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Cohen—3, "Morality without Religion"; 7, "Benefits of Unbelief."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, W. Stanley, "The Lake District"—illustrated by lantern views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. J. P. Burton, F.G.S.—3, "The Theory of Evolution and the Geological Evidences in its Favor"; 7, "The Great Ice Age: Did the Eyes of Man Witness It?"—with lantern illustrations. Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, A Reading.

WIGAN (Public Hall): H. P. Ward—11, "Is the Bible a Revelation from God?" 3, "What Secularism Offers in Place of Christianity"; 7, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—February 26, Liverpool. March 5, Liverpool; 12, Birmingham.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—February 26, Wigan. March 5, Chester; 12, Chester; 26, Birmingham. April 16, Glasgow.

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